

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 KUWAIT 04069 231526Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----053463 231540Z /42

P R 231408Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8580
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
USINT BAGHDAD

S E C R E T KUWAIT 4069

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: XF, US
SUBJECT: BEGIN VISIT

REF: STATE 171271

1. I BRIEFED FONMIN SHAIKH SABAH AL-AHMAD JULY 23 ON BEGIN MEETINGS WITH PRESIDENT CARTER DRAWING FROM REFTEL. HE LISTENED WITH CLOSE ATTENTION AND AT CONCLUSION OF BRIEFING QUESTIONED WHETHER ISRAEL REALLY WANTED PEACE. HE NOTED THAT NEWLY-ELECTED PRIMIN BEGIN HAD ALREADY REFERRED TO THE WEST BANK AS LIBERATED TERRITORY. IT SEEMED TO HIM THAT ISRAEL'S NEW LEADERSHIP WAS NOT CONCERNED WITH
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RESLOVING THE PALESTINIAN PROBLEM WHICH ALL HAVE PREVIOUSLY AGREED IS THE CORE OF THE ARAB-ISRAELI DISPUTE.

2. I REFERRED TO THE EMPHASIS BY PRESIDENT CARTER THAT OUR GOAL IN THIS MATTER REMAINS A COMPREHENSIVE PEACE SETTLEMENT. THEREFORE, WE FELT IT WAS IMPORTANT

TO START THE PEACE PROCESS, SINCE THE PUBLIC RECITAL OF UNILATERAL POSITIONS WAS NOT GETTING US ANYWHERE.

3. SABAH AL-AHMAD REITERATED, AS HE HAS IN THE PAST (KUWAIT 2660), HOW IMPORTANT IT WAS FOR THE USG TO TALK DIRECTLY TO THE PLO. HE REFERRED TO THE RECENT MEETING OF GOVERNOR SCRANTON WITH AKIL IN LONDON AND REMARKED UPON HOW EMPHATICALLY THE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN HAD REJECTED ANY OFFICIAL CONNECTION WITH THIS MEETING. I OBSERVED THAT, WHILE I WAS NOT ACQUAINTED WITH THE CONTENT OF THE SCRANTON MEETING, I DID RECALL FROM MY DAYS IN CAIRO THAT A NUMBER OF SENATORS AND REPRESENTATIVES HAD MET WITH PLO REPRESENTATIVES DURING THEIR MIDDLE EAST TOURS, AS HAD REPRESENTATIVE LEE HAMILTON ONLY RECENTLY. MORE OFTEN THAN NOT THEY CAME AWAY WITH THE FEELING THAT THEIR PLO INTERLOCUTORS WERE EVEN MORE RADICAL THAN THEY HAD ORIGINALLY ANTICIPATED. SABAH AL-AHMAD STATED CATEGORICALLY THAT IF THE USG WERE WILLING TO HAVE OFFICIAL CONTACTS WITH PALESTINIANS, HE COULD ARRANGE FOR MEETINGS WITH RESPONSIBLE, MODERATE, INFLUENTIAL MEMBERS OF THE PLO. HE CLAIMED THAT THE PALESTINIANS SUFFERED FROM BEING REGARDED AS "NON-PERSONS" AND REACTED ACCORDINGLY. HE SUGGESTED THAT WE SHOULD APPROACH THEM AS A PSYCHIATRIST DEALS WITH A SICK AND TROUBLED PATIENT. HE FIRMLY BELIEVES THAT PLO REPS WOULD REACT MUCH MORE REASONABLY IF GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO TALK WITH A US AMBASSADOR
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RATHER THAN AMERICAN INDIVIDUALS WHO HAD NO EXECUTIVE CONNECTION OR RESPONSIBILITY.

4. I OBSERVED AGAIN, AS I HAD DURING PREVIOUS CONVERSATIONS ON THIS SUBJECT, THAT IT WAS EXTREMELY DIFFICULT FOR US POLITICALLY TO MAKE OFFICIAL CONTACT WITH AN ORGANIZATION WHICH SUBSCRIBED TO A CHARTER ESSENTIALLY CALLING FOR THE ELIMINATION OF ISRAEL AS A STATE. I FELT THAT IT WAS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE ARAB NATIONS TO INFUSE SOME SENSE OF MODERATION INTO THE PLO AND TO REACH AN UNDERSTANDING AS TO WHAT THEY SEEK IN TERMS OF A PALESTINIAN HOMELAND LINKED WITH JORDAN. IN RESPONSE TO SABAH AL-AHMAD'S QUERY AS TO WHAT PRESIDENT CARTER SPECIFICALLY MEANT BY A "HOMELAND," I REPLIED THAT THIS WAS FOR THE NEGOTIATING PARTIES TO DECIDE AND AGREE UPON. HE ASSURED ME THAT ANY PALESTINIAN STATE ON THE WEST BANK AND GAZA COULD NOT EXIST WITHOUT TIES WITH JORDAN; OTHERWISE IT WOULD FIND ITSELF WEDGED BETWEEN TWO ENEMIES. MOREOVER, THE ARABS THEMSELVES WOULD SEE TO IT THAT ANY PALESTINIAN STATE WOULD NOT BE A THREAT TO ANYONE.

5. I TOLD THE FONMIN THAT SECRETARY VANCE WOULD COME

TO THE MIDDLE EAST IN THE FIRST WEEK IN AUGUST TO DISCUSS
FURTHER THE RECONVENING OF A GENEVA CONFERENCE. I WAS
NOT INFORMED OF HIS ITINERARY, BUT ASSUMED THAT HE WOULD
VISIT THE ARAB CONFRONTATION STATES, SAUDI ARABIA AND
ISRAEL. IN RESPONSE TO HIS QUERY I SAID THAT I DID NOT
KNOW IF THE U.S. AMBASSADORS IN THE AREA
WOULD HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO MEET WITH THE SECRETARY AS
WE IN THE GULF DID IN RIYADH DURING HIS LAST VISIT, BUT
I THOUGHT THIS WOULD BE AN EXCELLENT IDEA.

6. THE MEETING CONCLUDED WITH SABAH AL-AHMAD EXPRESSING
HIS APPRECIATION FOR THIS BRIEFING ON THE CARTER-BEGIN
TALKS AND THE HOPE THAT I COULD KEEP HIM INFORMED OF
FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS IN THIS MOST CRITICAL MATTER.

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Message Attributes

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Sent Date: 23-Jul-1977 12:00:00 am
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